

# THE WAR in January 1918











*A British Scouting Squadron ready to fly over the Enemy Lines.*

## THE WAR IN JANUARY 1918

**T**HERE is a lull on all the battle fronts. In spite of the readjustments in Italy and Palestine the weather has imposed a sort of armistice on the combatants.

"There is not much war in progress," writes Mr. Philip Gibbs, "except in the air, where on both sides planes are out trying to get photographs of the enemy lines, because, though the snow hides some things, it tells many secrets where it has melted above the dug-outs, and where tracks of feet go up to certain places, and where guns have been hidden by artful camouflage. War has called a truce because

of the snow, except for bursts of artillery fire on both sides, as a demonstration of the mighty power of destruction which is waiting there on our side and theirs for the call to battle when the Spring comes."

Such movement as there has been has been most conspicuous in Palestine and Italy. In Palestine General Allenby has beaten off a determined counter-attack, and, as a result of the month's operations, the British position is distinctly improved. In Italy, General Diaz has shown his grasp of the situation by instituting several local attacks to recover points



of tactical importance. In spite of all the claims made by the Germans the changes of the month show a balance in favour of the Allies. Behind the lines generally forces are being re-arranged and positions put in order for fresh efforts.

But the present month has seen the Austro-German offensive spent in Italy, and the Turko-German counter-offensive broken in Palestine. And the Allies can look back on a year of solid gains.

### The Attempt to Retake Jerusalem.

THE storms and rainy weather in Palestine have imposed much discomfort upon the troops, but without reducing them to inactivity. The Auja river was crossed in the coastal sector, in a brilliant little operation during the night of December 20th-21st; and, despite the stubborn resistance of the Turks, the position was made good. But General Allenby knew that the Turks were preparing a vigorous counter-attack for the recapture of Jerusalem. Two corps were used in the counter-attack, the Third and the Twentieth; and they were composed of picked troops stiffened by Germans. A new division had been brought up from the Caucasus. The main attack was directed from the north, down the Shechem road, and was supported by an assault along the Jericho road.

Just before midnight on December 26th the battle began with the capture of a small post north of Tel el Ful, a conical hill with an elevation of nearly 3,000 feet which looks down from the east upon the Shechem road, and commands the whole district in every direction for some miles. The hill was the first objective of the Turks, and the main attack upon it opened at 1.20 a.m. on the 27th, while Beit Hanina, about a mile west of the same road, was being assaulted. The Third and Twentieth Corps which operated on this sector of the front fought

with the violence of desperation. They were opposed by the London Territorials, who had to bear the onslaught of repeated attacks by storming troops. The fourth assault upon Hanina was delivered by 500 picked Turkish troops, but although they were able to fight up to the Londoners' positions they were hurled back after a fierce bayonet struggle.

Tel el Ful was the scene of eight attacks, and the heaviest was delivered at dawn under cover of a skilful and intense barrage. It fared no better than the rest, and was chiefly fruitful in heavy Turkish losses. About 7 o'clock, after much severe fighting, the Turks had made no headway, and a lull set in for re-organisation. A little after noon the pause ended with a general attack upon the positions held by the London Territorials on each side of the road. The assault was pressed with the greatest courage, and was not checked until the British lines were reached. The Londoners' machine guns raked the Turkish lines, but without bringing the enemy to a halt. At length the Turks reached the headworks, and then the defenders leaped from their positions, charged them with the bayonet, and finally flung them back.

Meanwhile Welsh and Home Counties troops held White Hill, slightly north of the Jericho road, against three fierce attacks; but the fighting became so violent that for some time the hill was tenantless. At dusk on the 27th the Turks tried to capture it, but were thrown back by a bayonet attack. At Obeid, further south, a British post was surrounded and heavily shelled; but the Middlesex men who garrisoned it held out. The Welshmen and Herefords were even sufficiently confident to organise an attack on Ras el Suffa, a commanding position, and during the darkness they carried it with but slight loss.

The Turkish counter-attack had gained none of its main objectives. It had been brought to a standstill by the magnificent steadiness of



the British troops, and converted into a significant British victory by the skill with which General Allenby took the offensive from the direction of Beth Horan. The British Commander realised how deeply the Turks were committed to their operations against Jerusalem, and he determined to profit by this knowledge by attacking towards the north on the right centre of the Turks. The troops used in this quarter were Irish and dismounted

Yeomanry. El Tireh was stormed by Yeomanry, but the sides of the hill are so steep that it took two hours to get supplies up. Another hill was so steep that the men mounted its terraced sides by climbing upon each others' shoulders.

The Yeomanry and Irishmen attacked with such vigour that they achieved immediate success. The Caucasus division was diverted to this sector from the attack upon Jerusalem,





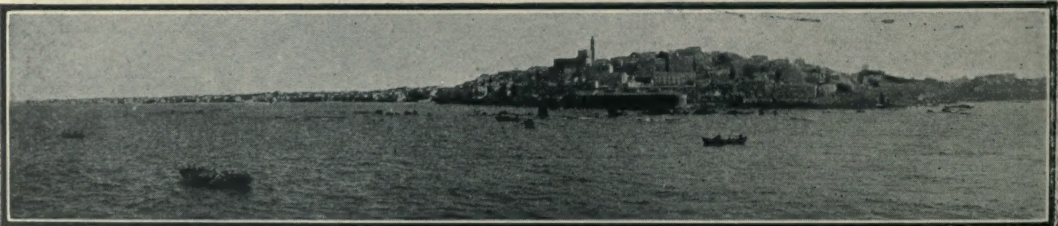


*The Municipal Buildings, Jaffa.*

but was unable to cope with the assailants, who stormed one position after another. The Zeitun ridge was taken by the Irish, who drove the Turks from their positions with the greatest gallantry. The Yeomanry captured Beitunia, and the men behind the front had worked with such spirit that the guns were hauled into the

foremost positions almost immediately, in preparation for a further advance.

On the following day the Londoners, having completely broken the attack upon Jerusalem, advanced and captured Er Ram, the biblical Ramah, and on the 29th occupied Bireh. The Yeomanry, advancing on their left, through



*Jaffa, from the sea.*





*Baghdad : The Mosque of Abdul Qadir Jilani in the distance.*

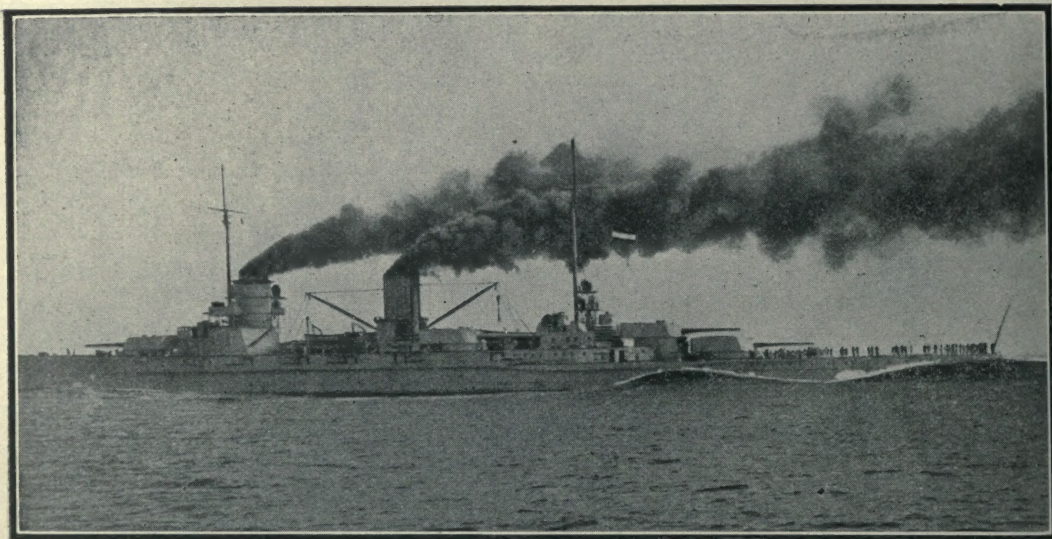
Beitunia, captured Ramallah at the same time, with the beautiful water supply that lies between it and Bireh. By the end of December General Allenby had captured the whole watershed between the Mediterranean and the Jordan up to Beitin, 12 miles north of Jerusalem, the Scriptural Bethel.

Small advances up to the Shechem road were made in the early days of the New Year before the weather broke. On January 7th snow was falling in Bethlehem. But by this time Jerusalem was beyond the sound of guns, and the troops had clearly established their superiority.

### The Italian Recoil.

THOUGH small, the various gains on the Italian front were important tactically, and tend to show that the Austro-German offensive is for the present completely spent. They were well distributed over the Italian front. Two of them were on the Piave sector. East of Capo Sile, which lies north-east of the Venetian lagoons, the Grenadiers enlarged their bridgehead in the cheerless fen-country of the Piave delta. At Zenson, where the river makes one of its numerous bends, the Austrians were gradually pressed back over the





*The "Goeben."*

river. They had organised the position skilfully. Numbers of bridges had been flung across the river, and every opportunity was seized for extending the bridgehead. It was not a great operation, but the position had to be won back little by little, and at length the eastward bend of the river was abandoned and the enemy withdrew to the left bank.

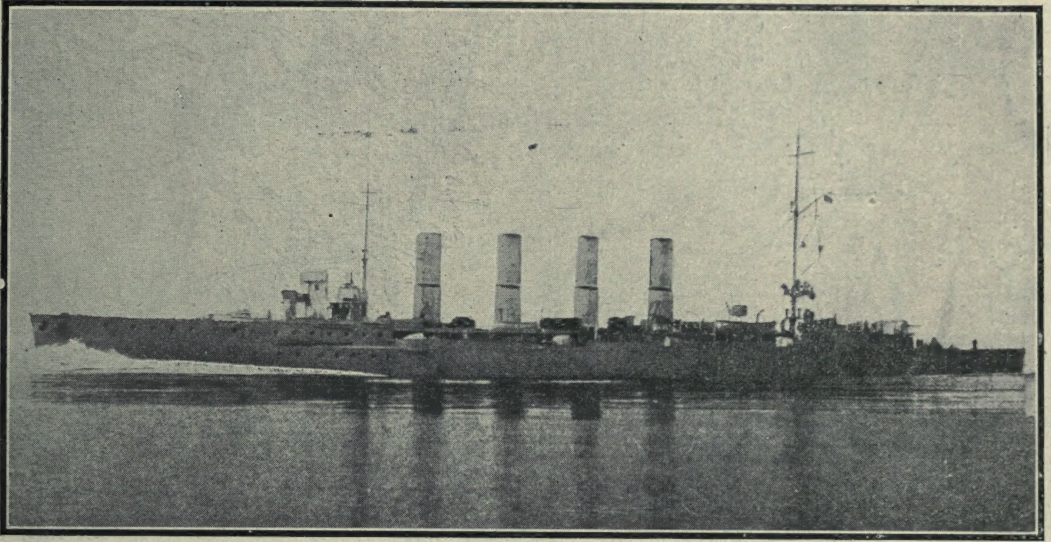
In the mountain region which lies between Asiago and the Piave the main enemy attack had been delivered, and in a number of places the mountain defences of the plain had been worn thin. At many points along this sector of the front the Italian positions have been strengthened during the month. In the Asolone region, which lies east of Mte. Grappa, and still farther west, about Col del Rosso, there were small advances to straighten the line; but the most important gain was the capture of Mte. Tomba by the French.

On the 29th of December the French troops lying on the left of the British, where the Italian front bends south-east to follow the Piave,

began a bombardment which was intensified on the following day. The infantry advanced early in the afternoon and stormed the positions on a front of 2,000 yards between Osteria di Monfenera and Naranzine, capturing 44 officers and 1,348 men, with 60 machine guns, seven mortars, and several trench guns. The positions gained were important as strengthening the British flank by pressing back the enemy from his observation stations on Monte Tomba. The operation was developed steadily. The crest of Mte. Tomba being wholly secured, the Austrians were left on the northern slope in small sniping parties to hold out as best they might.

On January 2nd there were signs that even these were falling back, and in four days all the enemy troops had been withdrawn between Mte. Tomba and the Ornic torrent which skirts the southern edge of Alano village. The withdrawal extended to the depth of a mile, and the whole episode, with its brilliant attack and capture of a position which held the fate of the area





*The German cruiser "Breslau" which was sunk on January 20.*

about it, was characteristic of the French troops and aroused the liveliest hopes for the future.

### The Goeben and the Breslau.

THE chequered career of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* was still further enlivened by an attempted sortie from the Dardanelles on January 20th.

At 5.20 a.m., when H.M. destroyer *Lizard* was about two miles from the north-easterly point of Imbros on patrol duty, she sighted the *Breslau* steaming in a northerly direction to the south-east of Cape Kephalo, shortly followed by the *Goeben*, about a mile astern.

H.M.S. *Lizard* at once gave the alarm, and, opening fire, proceeded to keep in as close touch as possible with the enemy ships. The *Goeben* and the *Breslau* engaged the *Lizard* at about 11,000 yards, straddling her without hitting.

The *Goeben* now sighted the monitors in Kusu Bay, on the north-east corner of Imbros, and engaged them, the *Breslau* continuing to

engage the *Lizard*, which was prevented from closing to torpedo range by the accuracy of the German vessel's fire at shorter range.

H.M. destroyer *Tigress* now joined the *Lizard*, and the two destroyers endeavoured to cover the monitors by forming a smoke screen, in attempting which they were subjected to an accurate fire from the *Goeben*. Meanwhile H.M.S. *Raglan* had been heavily hit and sank, and the small monitor M 28, which was on fire amidships, blew up, and finally disappeared about 6 a.m. The *Goeben* then ceased fire, and altered course to the southward.

The *Tigress* and the *Lizard*, observing that trawlers were coming to the assistance of the monitors, followed the German vessels.

At 7 a.m., when the *Breslau* was about six miles south of Kephalo, a large explosion was observed abreast her after funnel. Two or three minutes later three more explosions took place, and at 10 minutes past 7 she sank by the stern, heeling over as she went down. On see-











ing the *Breslau* sink, the *Goeben* turned and circled round her once, and then continued on her southerly course.

Immediately after this four Turkish destroyers were sighted coming out of the Dardanelles, supported by an old Turkish cruiser. The *Tigress* and the *Lizard* at once engaged the enemy destroyers, which hurriedly retired up the Straits, the nearest one being hit repeatedly and set on fire.

The *Goeben* continued on her southerly course until an attack by British aircraft forced her to alter course and head for the Dardanelles. In the act of turning, however, she struck a mine, which caused her to settle down aft with a list of 10 to 15 degrees, and which considerably reduced her speed. She proceeded slowly up the Dardanelles escorted by enemy seaplanes and the four Turkish destroyers, which had returned to her assistance. The British aircraft repeatedly attacked her, and obtained two direct hits when off Chanak.

The *Goeben* was now in such a damaged condition that she was steered for the shore and was beached at the extreme end of Nagara Point, about 100 yards from the lighthouse. Shortly after beaching, two more direct hits were made on her by British aircraft, which were heavily engaged by several Turkish seaplanes. From the encounters which took place one of the British seaplanes failed to return.

The shore batteries at Cape Helles then opened an accurate fire on the *Tigress* and the *Lizard*, which had been following the *Goeben*, and, in view of the activity of the British naval aircraft, the two destroyers retired out of range and proceeded to rescue the survivors of the *Breslau*. During these operations the periscope of a submarine was sighted, and the work of rescue was seriously interfered with while the destroyers hunted the submarine.

The German survivors from the *Breslau* ex-

pressed intense dislike for the Turks, and stated that they had hoped to be sent back to Germany on the *Goeben's* return to Constantinople after the raid.

### The Year 1917.

THE year which has just passed has established the clear superiority of the Allies on the Western front, where they are within reasonable distance of numerical and material equality. In the East it saw them even more conspicuously superior to the enemy and witnessed the capture of the two symbols of Turkish Empire—Jerusalem and Bagdad. In Italy the autumn saw an unfortunate reversal of the previous course of the campaign with the failure of some of the troops on the upper Isonzo, and the breakdown in Russia seems now to be complete.

There might be some question of the balance of these factors; but there can be none about the balance of the whole of the year's events. The United States, with its 100,000,000 inhabitants, has entered wholeheartedly into the war on the side of the Allies, and the true bearing of the situation is not understood only by those who held in 1914 that the British Armies never could reach their present size or efficiency. Furthermore, with the entry of the United States, practically all the States in the world outside Europe have espoused the cause of the Allies, and as they produce the main bulk of the raw material upon which the modern industrial state depends, this represents an Allied victory of the most decisive and far-reaching character.

### The Victories on the West.

THE year's fighting opened with the first clear admission of the Germans that they could not stand up to the full force of the Franco-British offensive for long. The unrestricted submarine campaign was tanta-





mount to such an admission, for it announced unambiguously that the Germans would even

risk the entrance of America into the field rather than face the unlimited continuance of hammer blows like the Somme attacks.

In March the Germans emphasised the admission by falling back between Arras and the Aisne to a depth which amounted in places to over 30 miles. This was the only retreat of any extent of either side since the Battle of the Marne, and no unbiased student of the war missed its lesson.

But the Battle of Arras followed hard upon the withdrawal, and the Germans lost not only the Vimy Ridge with the positions giving observation over the Douai plain, but also 19,500 prisoners, 257 guns, 227 trench mortars, and 464 machine guns. Then came the French attack on the Aisne. Further important positions were secured, and the Germans lost about 29,000 prisoners, and were reduced by constant counter-attacks to one of those long defensives which are most wasteful in men and depressing to the spirit.

The Battle of Messines Ridge took place in June, and at one stroke the Ypres salient was wiped out. The ridge which had enabled the Germans to follow every movement in Ypres was captured at a bound, and with it 7,200 prisoners, 67 guns, 94 trench mortars and 294 machine guns. At the end of the following month the long struggle for the ridge east of Ypres began, and it lasted until Passchendaele had been captured, and the weather had turned the country on the north-east of the line of advance into an impenetrable morass. This battle gave the British 24,065 prisoners, 74 guns, 941 machine guns, and 138 trench mortars. The total German losses were extremely high—much higher than the British—and the Germans were left to winter under conditions which the year before had been experienced by the British only.

Meanwhile the French had delivered a bril-





*Some of the German prisoners taken by the British in Flanders.*





*General Allenby leaving Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate.*





line, and thus troops were diverted which would otherwise have been thrown into Italy. The whole campaign on the Western front was unified by its immediate objective, the capture of observational positions, which economised the Allies' forces, and placed a proportionately heavier burden on those of Germany.

### The Capture of Jerusalem.

THE most striking event of the whole year was, the capture of Jerusalem on December 9th. The city fell as the result of a short but brilliant campaign that really began at the end of October with the attack on Beersheba.

The campaign in Palestine acted as a flank guard to General Maude's operations in Mesopotamia. At the beginning of the year General Sir Archibald Murray, the Chief of the Staff of Sir John French at Mons, was in command, and the British troops were on the Egyptian

liant attack at the elbow of the line above Soissons, and the immediate success was of such importance that the Germans pocketed their pride and fell back over the river Ailette to the last defensive line of Laon. The French on this occasion took 11,157 prisoners and over 200 guns.

The most surprising battle of all was that of Cambrai, which just failed to secure decisive results; but even when the Germans had counter-attacked with heavy forces the British were left in possession of a considerable stretch of the "impregnable" Hindenburg





frontier. There were great difficulties in the way of advance, the chief of which was the lack of water, and before the campaign could be developed a pipe-line had to be laid down and a light railway constructed to assist in the work of supply.

In the spring the advance began, but the first attempts to capture Gaza failed. The Turks had taken up their positions skilfully, and under the directions of German engineers the line had been strongly fortified. But the attack did not satisfy the British command, and General Allenby was sent out to take charge of the campaign.

General Allenby opened hostilities with a brilliant success at Beersheba at the end of October, and after that he used the leverage secured by the capture of the town to bring pressure upon Gaza. At the end of the first week of November Gaza had fallen, and the mounted troops began to push along the coastal plain with great speed. In ten days Jaffa had fallen, and the British columns changed the line of their advance and began to enter the highlands of Judea.

With this development the attack was pressed up the Hebron road and towards Jerusalem. A fierce 7-days' struggle had been fought at Khuweilfeh, where the Turks held a strong position on high ground. The British troops were short of water—so short indeed that men's lips cracked, and it was difficult to speak—but the attack was pressed with the greatest vigour.

Facing Jerusalem were London Territorials, Irishmen and Yeomanry, and when the attack developed in the first week of December the troops rapidly closed in. Welsh and Home Counties troops marched along the Hebron road, by Bethlehem, and struck towards the Jericho road. The Londoners moved eastward for the Nebi Samwil ridge towards the Shechem road, and the Turks, threatened with envelopment, retired. Jerusalem was sur-



Elliott & Fry.

*General Marshall, who succeeded General Maude, as Commander-in-chief in Mesopotamia.*

rendered on December 9th. Not a shot had been fired into it by the attacking troops, and every respect was paid to the inhabitants.

This victory rounded off the successes of the Allies, and with the British Cabinet's declaration of sympathy with the idea of the re-establishment of the Jews in Palestine the Allies showed themselves as farsighted in statesmanship as they had been in strategy.

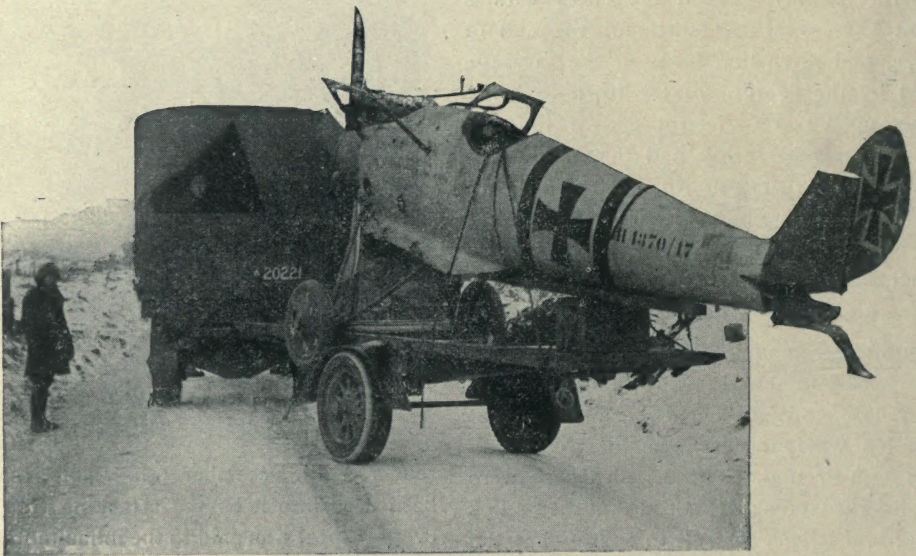
### The Capture of Bagdad.

GENERAL SIR STANLEY MAUDE carried out a most brilliant campaign in Mesopotamia, and lived to see it



crowned by complete success. With his lieutenants, General Marshall (the present commander-in-chief) and General Cobbe, he recovered Kut and marched with great rapidity on Bagdad. Having captured this historic city

he established his position little by little far beyond on the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Jebel Hamrin Hills. The campaign completely wiped out the bad management that had marked the middle stages of the campaign.



*The last of a German Scouting Machine.*



# DIARY.

- Dec. 24.—Italians retake Mt. Melago. British raid on Mannheim.
- „ 25.—Strong Austrian attack between Col del Rosso and Val Frenzela.
- „ 26.—Big aerial battle over Treviso; 11 enemy machines brought down.
- „ 27.—Enemy attacks at Ras el Tawil and east of Bir Nebala.
- „ 28.—British gain Ras Arkub es Suffa, Anata, Er Rami, Kulundia, and Beitunia. Enemy bomb Treviso, Montebelluna, Castelfranco, and Padua.

- Dec. 29.—British take Bireh, Hizmeh, Jeba, Burkah, ridge of Ram Allah, and Kh el Tireh.
- „ 30.—British occupy Beitin, El Balua, Kh el Burj, Janiah, and Ras Kerker, and reach Kuleh. French storm positions between Osteria di Monfenera and Naranzine on Mte. Tomba section; 1,392 prisoners. Enemy attack on Welsh Ridge, south Cambrai.
- „ 31.—British regain positions on Welsh Ridge.

## JANUARY.

- Jan. 1.—Austrians driven back to left bank of Piave at Zenson.
- „ 4.—Hospital ship *Rewa* torpedoed and sunk.
- „ 5.—Strong enemy attack east of Bullecourt. British reconnaissance from Aden towards Hatum and Jabir.
- „ 8.—Enemy attack at Bullecourt repulsed. In the Woevre, near Seicheprez, the French penetrate over 1,600 yards in German position; 178 prisoners.
- „ 10.—London and Rifle regiments raid enemy trenches south-east of Ypres.

- Jan. 14.—British daylight raid on Karlsruhe. Yarmouth bombarded from the sea. Italians rectify line from north of Osteria il Lepre to Cesilla valley; 291 prisoners.
- „ 16.—Austrian counter-attack at Capo Sile repulsed.
- „ 18.—British front advanced 1 mile in neighbourhood of Durah (Palestine).
- „ 20.—Naval battle at entrance to Dardanelles; *Breslau* sunk, *Goeben* damaged.
- „ 21.—British occupation of Luvambula Boma (East Africa) announced.





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